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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000126

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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP AND NEA/IPA

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT DECRIES GAZA SITUATION, SENDS RED CRESCENT  
TEAM

REF: KUWAIT 0086

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alan G. Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 (b)  
) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In response to the January 23 breaching of the border at Rafah, Kuwaiti MPs, governmental bodies, and human rights organizations have united in criticism of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. This follows a January 22 Parliamentary declaration condemning Israeli actions in Gaza (reftel). The Kuwait Red Crescent Society sent a team to Rafah to deliver aid to the Palestinians, and some Kuwaiti charitable organizations have begun collecting relief funds. The GOK is deferring to NGOs to respond to the humanitarian aspect of the crisis, while noting that HAMAS "must be part of the political process." Islamist MP Waleed Tabtabaei and al-Qaeda-linked charity RIHS are attempting to exploit the situation to enhance their domestic standing. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On January 24, the Kuwait Municipal Council issued a communique condemning Israeli actions against the people of Gaza and called on the UN Security Council to convene an emergency session to address the dire situation there. On January 25, the Kuwait Fundamental Human Rights Society held a symposium in support of the Palestinian people, during which current and former MPs voiced their disapproval of Israeli policies vis-a-vis Gaza. And on January 26, the Kuwait Human Rights Society issued a statement decrying Israeli sanctions against Gaza and the subsequent hardships imposed on the Palestinians. It called on the international community to encourage Israel to lift its sanctions and improve the humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip.

¶3. (U) This follows a January 22 Parliamentary declaration noting the National Assembly's "strong annoyance and extreme concern (with) the bloody and painful events which take place daily in the Gaza Strip" and calling for "Arab and Islamic efforts to save the Palestinian people from a looming disaster" (reftel). Kuwait FM Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah also condemned Israeli sanctions against Gaza on January 22, noting its "blatant violation of Article 73 of the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Convention of 1949." The humanitarian situation in Gaza has also provided a convenient platform for Kuwait's Islamist MPs, who have been particularly vocal of their criticism of Israel and the U.S.

¶4. (C) Kuwait's NGOs have been active in mounting a humanitarian response. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (RCS) dispatched a disaster relief team to the Rafah area to assess the situation and provide humanitarian assistance in coordination with the Egyptian RCS. Kuwait RCS director Barges Al-Barges told the Kuwaiti News Agency that his team came from Kuwait to express solidarity with the people of

Gaza and address the "dismal humanitarian conditions" of the Gaza Strip.

15. (C) Islamist MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, who is currently in Cairo attending an Organization of Islamic Conferences meeting, said that only one-half on the Kuwait RCS relief supplies have reached Gaza thus far. Al-Tabtabaei reportedly attempted to personally monitor the deliveries, but was stopped by Egyptian security personnel at the Suez Canal due to security concerns. He is playing up the situation to garner domestic political advantage.

16. (C) Kuwaiti charities have also responded to the calls for assistance. On January 30, the Kuwait Social Reform Society (SRS) began a fund-raising campaign for Gazans and announced a program to shelter Gazan orphans. SRS Director Dr. Abdullah Al-Ateeqi also called on MPs and the GOK to find a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue.

17. (C) The Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), a charitable organization with links to Hamas and Al-Qaeda, is also reportedly collecting contributions for Gazan Palestinians. Post will follow up with the GOK to insist on strictest monitoring and oversight.

18. (C) On January 31, A/Polcouns spoke with MFA Arab League Director Ahmed Al-Baqer regarding the situation in Gaza. Al-Baqer downplayed the primacy of the GOK role in the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and said that the actions of NGOs, notably the Kuwaiti RCS, represent the real Kuwaiti response to the crisis. He remarked that the GOK previously pledged USD 300 million to the Palestinians during the Paris Donor's Conference, but had not yet disbursed any funds, stating that the GOK wanted to ensure that "every cent gets

KUWAIT 00000126 002 OF 002

into the right hands." He also said that the GOK condemns the role of HAMAS in provoking the Israelis, and blames the group for disrupting the peace process. However, Baqer insisted that HAMAS is a "part of the political process" and that the international community must be able to deal with it. (Note: On January 23, Kuwait's Parliament approved an emergency U.S. \$10 million appropriation for Gaza and is also reportedly discussing a possible U.S. \$500 million infrastructure development package for the Palestinian territories. End note.)

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